

CLAIMS

1. A method for operating an online service facility selectively accessed by multiple
5 member computers, the online service facility including a plurality of online data centers operated by an online service provider (OSP) to store members' data objects relating to a variety of online services that the OSP renders to its members, the method comprising operations of:
 - providing an aggregated catalog that contains information including: (1)
10 metadata identifying members' data objects residing in the data centers, and (2) metadata identifying members' data objects residing in local storage of respective member computers;
 - monitoring contents of the data centers to detect new storage of prescribed types of data objects owned by the members;
15 communicating with the member computers to identify prescribed types of data objects newly stored in the member computers' local storage;
updating the aggregated catalog to list the newly stored data objects from the online data centers and member computers' local storage;
responsive to each request by a member, searching the aggregated catalog
20 and utilizing results of the search to provide an output for display at the requesting member's computer, the output comprising a consolidated listing of both online data objects and locally stored data objects owned by the requesting member.

- 25 2. The method of claim 1, where:
 - the consolidated listing includes a member-activatable VIEW feature;
 - the operations further comprise, responsive to activation of the VIEW feature in conjunction with a particular one of the listed data objects, activating

software to present contents of the particular data object to the member.

3. The method of claim 1, where:

5 the consolidated listing includes a member-activatable SHARE feature; the operations further comprise, responsive to activation of the SHARE feature in conjunction with a particular one of the listed data objects, activating software to share the particular data object with a member-designated transferee.

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4. The method of claim 1, where the operations further comprise:

15 during display of the consolidated listing at the member's computer, updating the display substantially in real time to reflect any data objects that are of prescribed types, owned by the member, and newly stored in the online data center during the display.

5. The method of claim 1, where the monitoring operation is carried out by at least one of the following operations:

20 communicating with the data centers to identify data objects contained therein; monitoring members' activities conducted while accessing the online service facility.

6. The method of claim 1, where:

25 the operations of searching the aggregated catalog and utilizing results of the search to provide an output are performed by an online finder; the operations further comprise employing software at the requesting member's computer to display the output.

7. Data management equipment for use in an online service facility selectively accessed by multiple member computers, the online service facility including a plurality of online data centers operated by an online service provider (OSP) to store 5 members' data objects relating to a variety of online services that the OSP renders to its members, the equipment comprising:

an aggregated catalog that contains information including: (1) metadata identifying members' data objects residing in the data centers, and (2) metadata identifying members' data objects residing in local storage of 10 respective member computers;

an aggregator programmed to perform operations comprising:

monitoring contents of the data centers to detect new storage of prescribed types of data objects owned by the members;

communicating with the member computers to identify prescribed types 15 of data objects newly stored in the member computers' local storage;

updating the aggregated catalog to list to include metadata identifying the newly stored data objects contained in the online data centers and local storage;

20 a finder programmed to perform operations comprising, responsive to request by a member, searching the aggregated catalog and utilizing results of the search to provide an output for display at the requesting member's computer, the output comprising a consolidated listing of online data objects and locally stored data objects owned by the requesting member.

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8. The equipment of claim 7, where the finder is further programmed such that:

the consolidated listing includes a member-activatable VIEW feature;

the operations performed by the finder further comprise, responsive to activation of the VIEW feature in conjunction with a particular one of the listed data objects, activating software to present contents of the particular data object to the member.

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9. The equipment of claim 7, where the finder is further programmed such that: the consolidated listing includes a member-activatable SHARE feature; the operations performed by the finder further comprise, responsive to activation of the SHARE feature in conjunction with a particular one of the listed data objects, activating software to share the particular data object with a member designated transferee.

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10. The equipment of claim 7, where the finder is further programmed to perform operations comprising:

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during display of the consolidated listing at the member's computer, updating the display substantially in real time to reflect any data objects that are of prescribed types, owned by the member, and newly stored in the online data center during the display.

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11. The equipment of claim 7, where the aggregator is programmed such that the monitoring operation is carried out by at least one of the following operations:

communicating with the data centers to identify data objects contained therein;

monitoring members' activities conducted while utilizing the online service facility.

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12. The equipment of claim 7, where:

the finder comprises one or more processing entities at the online service facility;

the equipment further includes local interface software installed at the member computers, programmed to display the output.

13. Data management equipment for use in an online service facility selectively accessed by multiple member computers, the online service facility including a plurality of online data centers operated by an online service provider (OSP) to store members' data objects relating to a variety of online services that the OSP renders to its members, the equipment comprising:

aggregated catalog means for storing information including: (1) metadata identifying members' data objects residing in the data centers, and (2) metadata identifying members' data objects residing in local storage of respective member computers;

aggregator means for:

monitoring contents of the data centers to detect new storage of prescribed types of data objects owned by the members; communicating with the member computers to identify prescribed types of data objects newly stored in the member computers' local storage;

updating the aggregated catalog means to include metadata identifying the data objects newly stored data objects contained in the data centers and local storage;

finder means for, responsive to each request by a member, searching the aggregated catalog means and utilizing results of the search to provide an output for display at the requesting member's computer, the output comprising a consolidated listing of online data objects and locally stored data objects owned by the member.